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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this guide is to enable a district or school to develop or select a comprehensive school health education curriculum that is educationally sound and based on research of effective programs. The criteria for a comprehensive school health education curriculum are organized into the following categories: (1) goals and objectives; (2) content or subject matter included in the curriculum; (3) teaching strategies to facilitate student learning; (4) learning activities engaged in by the students; (5) materials which are a part of the curriculum pack used by teachers or students; (6) the amount of time devoted to implementing the curriculum; (7) student assessments administered during curriculum implementation; (8) materials which reflect cultural equity when there is a balance in the positive representation of diverse populations; (9) the balance of gender roles depicted in traditional and nontraditional settings; and (10) district-specific criteria. For purposes of evaluation, each criterion is presented on a chart with a Likert-like scale for appraising how well that criterion is currently being met, and a space is provided for needs and comments.(JD)

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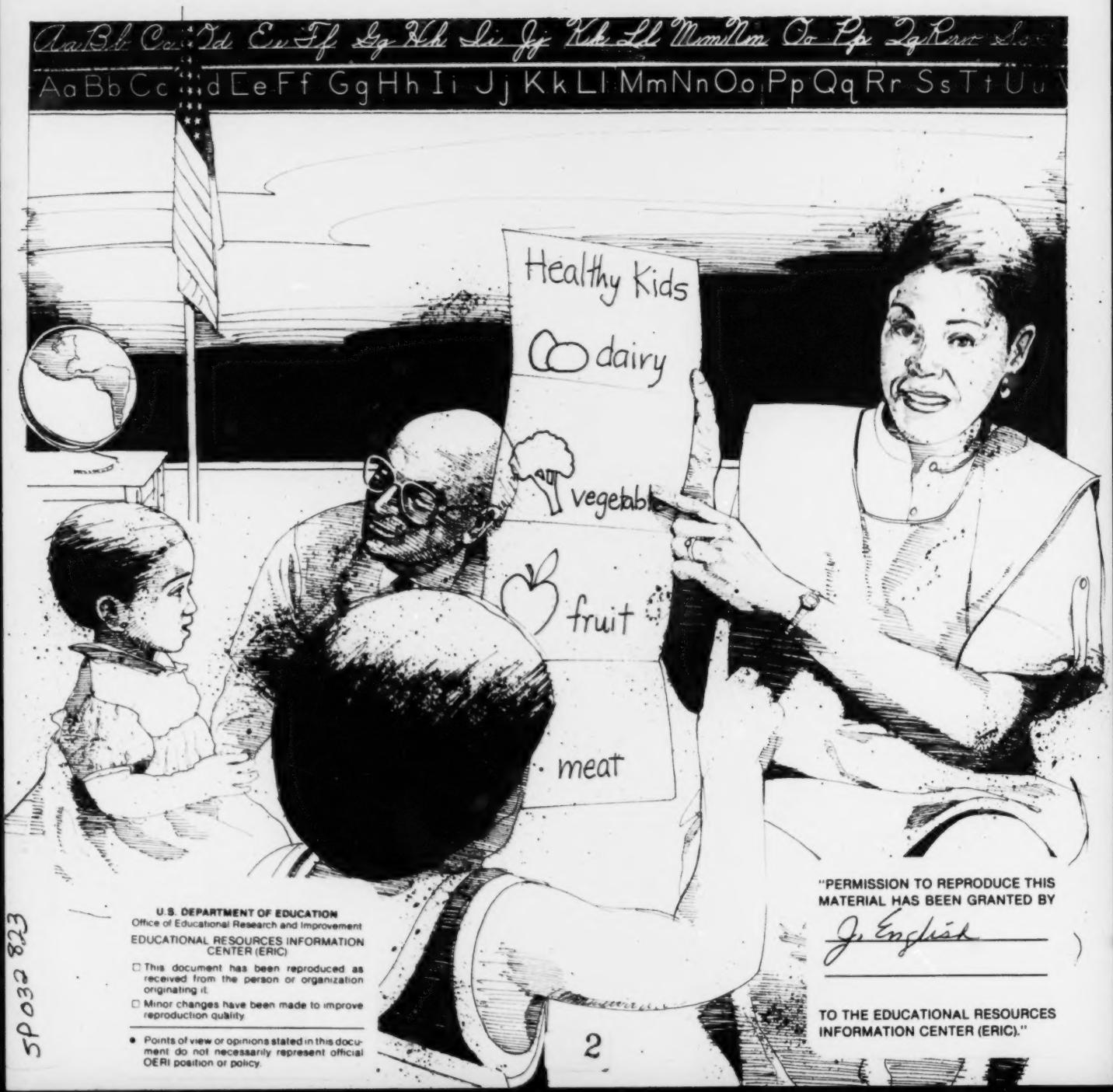
CRITERIA FOR COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION CURRICULA



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Criteria for Comprehensive Health Education Curricula

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INTRODUCTION

Through funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive School Health Education Program, the Southwest Regional Laboratory identified and analyzed comprehensive school health education curricula that were evaluated and shown to affect positively students' health behaviors. We limited our definition of comprehensive curricula to those that covered a variety of health topics and grade levels, thereby eliminating content and grade-specific criteria. From this analysis we developed the criteria in this document.

The purpose of this guide is to enable a district or school to develop or select a comprehensive school health education curriculum that is educationally sound and based on research of other programs that were proven effective.

As health instruction is only one component of a total school health program, this guide is not meant as a tool to evaluate a district's or school's comprehensive school health program. For additional resources to serve this purpose, see the list of selected resources at the back of this guide.

Additional copies of *Criteria for Comprehensive Health Education Curricula* may be obtained by contacting: Comprehensive Health Education Program, Southwest Regional Laboratory, 4665 Lampson Avenue, Los Alamitos, CA 90720.

CRITERIA ORGANIZATION

The following criteria for a comprehensive school health education curriculum are based on educational theory, research of effective health education programs, and the practical application of those programs. The criteria are expressed in terms of the optimum and are organized into the following categories: goals and objectives; content; teaching strategies; learning activities; materials; time; evaluation; cultural equity; sex equity; and district-specific criteria.

PREPARATION FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The first step in developing or selecting a comprehensive school health education curriculum is to form a district team. Suggested members for this team include:

- health education specialist;
- curriculum specialist;
- teacher;
- school/district administrator;
- school counselor;
- principal;
- parent;
- school nurse;
- student;
- representative from a community health agency, such as the local health department; and
- representative from a local voluntary health agency.

In lieu of having a single parent or community member whose views may not accurately reflect the majority's on a team, a separate representative parent/community advisory committee may be established to review and comment on the work of the curriculum committee. Other representatives relevant to your community (e.g., religious leaders and youth organization leaders) also may be appropriate team members.

After receiving thorough orientation and guidance, the team needs to accomplish the following tasks:

1. *Develop realistic, attainable goals for the curriculum.* One of the main reasons many past prevention efforts failed is because goals were so ambitious that they were virtually impossible to achieve. In addition, it is unrealistic to expect that a school-based curriculum alone would be able to affect students' health behaviors without the support of other school and community programs. The goals that the curriculum itself may attain must be within reason, given the school's resources and level of commitment for it to be successful.

2. *Carefully review the criteria.* To ensure that the criteria in this workbook are applicable to an individual district the team needs to review them prior to curriculum development or analysis.

3. *Decide on additional criteria the team thinks are important.* There may be criteria other than those given in this guide the team may want to consider. These criteria will be specific to district, school, or state guidelines, such as emphasis on health issues prominent in the population or the use of local health resources.

4. *Determine how the curriculum will fit into the overall comprehensive health program.* A comprehensive school health program includes far more than curriculum, such as nutrition services, counseling, staff development, and health services. Determine how the curriculum can support the total health program. Find out what other federally or state funded programs are already in place that may be using curriculum. Assess the current and projected district priorities for health education.

5. *Find out what curricula are being used by other districts.* Sharing and consultation with other districts can be valuable in locating resources, identifying and resolving potential problems, and creating an idea network.

Once these tasks are completed, the team is ready to begin the process.

USING THE CRITERIA

This workbook may be used (a) to guide a district in the development of their own curricula and (b) as a tool to systematically analyze curricula being considered for purchase by a district.

There are several basic criteria not included in this guide. These include, but are not limited to, the following: (a) materials are current and valid; (b) materials are durable and safe; and (c) content is accurate and reflects current knowledge of the field. It is absolutely essential that these gateway criteria be met when developing or selecting any health education curriculum.

Curriculum Development

Many school districts are interested in developing a health education curriculum specifically for their own district. The

criteria in this workbook may be extremely useful in guiding a district to develop a curriculum that is based on research of effective programs with substantial potential to influence actual behavior change in its students.

Curriculum Analysis

There are many existing health education curricula that districts may want to use in lieu of developing their own. This guide may be used to analyze systematically such curricula to select the most appropriate one for the school. Since the quality of curricula may vary by grade level, it is suggested that the criteria be used to evaluate one curriculum at each grade level rather than using the one form to evaluate all the grades within a curriculum.

To begin each team member should rate each curriculum independently. The curriculum should be analyzed according to the degree that it meets the criterion: completely, to some degree, not at all. In addition, if the curriculum does meet the criterion to some degree, the percentage to which it is met should be rated as: 75%, 50%, or 25%. These percentages should be used simply as guidelines, not actual calculations. The score for each criterion should be circled, based on the analysis. There is space next to the rating of each criterion for comments and notes as to what is lacking or is exceptionally good.

After that task is completed, the committee should meet to discuss any significant individual discrepancies, coming to a consensus about any necessary revisions.

The total score for each category is tallied and transferred to page 18 for easier analysis of all curricula reviewed. *It is strongly recommended that curricula not be selected based on the total score.* Each set of criteria has not been given an equal value in the overall scoring and needs to be prioritized according to district and school needs and priorities. A main purpose of this document is to assist districts in the systematic analysis of curricula so that curricula may be given a fair and thorough analysis of all components. Curricula may be selected using one of the following processes:

1. Select one curriculum from an array of curricula.
2. Select one curriculum based on its own merits, without comparing it to others.
3. Develop a list of acceptable curricula from which policymakers may select.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are the long-range results toward which the curriculum is directed—or the development of positive health behaviors in this case. Objectives are a listing of what the students will be able to do at the conclusion of the curricular program as a means of attaining the overall goals.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The goals and objectives are *realistically* attainable.	4	3	2	1	0	
2. Goals and objectives are related to the district's identified needs.	4	3	2	1	0	
3. Objectives are well-defined and measurable.	4	3	2	1	0	
4. Both long-term and short-term objectives are included.	4	3	2	1	0	
5. Objectives include a strong focus on a positive approach to health promotion.	4	3	2	1	0	
6. Program includes a balance of cognitive, affective, and behavioral objectives.	4	3	2	1	0	
7. Objectives reflect an appropriate and comprehensive scope and sequence for grade level.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 28

CONTENT

The content refers to the subject matter included in the curriculum.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. Curriculum contains appropriate continuity, scope, and sequence throughout the grade level.	4	3	2	1	0	
2. Content is based on the health needs and interests of all students.	4	3	2	1	0	
3. Content may also be integrated into a variety of other subject matter as a means of reinforcing the health education course.	4	3	2	1	0	
4. Content addresses the perspectives of various ethnic and cultural groups.	4	3	2	1	0	
5. Curriculum contains content based on effective school health education programs, including: • growth and development; • mental/emotional health; • family life; • safety and first aid; • consumer health; • drug use and abuse; • community health management/environmental health; • disease prevention and control; and • nutrition.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 20

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Teaching strategies are the activities or strategies used *by the teacher* to facilitate student learning.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The curriculum uses a variety of instructional methodologies for effective health education programs, such as: • inquiry; • simulation; • small group activities/cooperative learning; • role playing; • whole group process; and • group investigation.	4	3	2	1	0	
2. The instructional strategies take into account the cultural and ethnic values, customs, and practices of the community.	4	3	2	1	0	
3. The curriculum uses teaching strategies that teachers and students will find interesting and rewarding.	4	3	2	1	0	
4. The instructional strategies are appropriate for the grade level.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 16

12

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Learning activities are the activities engaged in *by the students* to help them achieve the curricular objectives.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The curriculum uses learning activities for effective health education programs with activities focused on: • social action; • decisionmaking; • skill rehearsal; • critical analysis; • values identification; and • goal setting.	4	3	2	1	0	
2. The curriculum provides meaningful homework activities.	4	3	2	1	0	
3. Homework assignments provide opportunities for parent involvement.	4	3	2	1	0	
4. Activities foster higher-order thinking among students.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 16

MATERIALS

The materials are items that are a part of the curricular package used by teachers or students.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The curriculum uses materials of effective health education programs, such as manipulatives, media, books, charts, and learning centers.	4	3	2	1	0	
2. Materials are appropriate for the academic levels of the target population and adaptable to differing student needs.	4	3	2	1	0	
3. Materials are relevant to the program objectives.	4	3	2	1	0	
4. Materials may easily be used by teachers, containing clear format and direction.	4	3	2	1	0	
5. Materials are aesthetically pleasing, high quality, and likely to excite the interest of teachers and students.	4	3	2	1	0	
6. The structure of the curriculum allows the materials to be easily updated.	4	3	2	1	0	
7. References and support materials are provided for teachers.	4	3	2	1	0	
8. The curriculum relies on much more than a text to organize classroom instruction.	4	3	2	1	0	
9. Materials do not require extraordinary effort on the part of teachers to obtain.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 36

TIME

Time refers to the amount of time devoted to implementing the curriculum.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The curriculum is of adequate time and intensity to meet all objectives.	4	3	2	1	0	
2. The amount of time allotted for each lesson fits the scheduling needs of the instructor/school.	4	3	2	1	0	
3. A minimum of 50 classroom hours of instruction per year is provided.	4	3	2	1	0	
4. The curriculum includes adequate time for review, mastery, reinforcement, and extension.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 16

EVALUATION

The evaluation includes student assessments administered during the curriculum's implementation.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. The curriculum provides teachers with a means of assessing student attainment of objectives.	4	3	2	1	0	
2. Student assessments are clearly linked to all curricular objectives.	4	3	2	1	0	
3. Student assessment is included for health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.	4	3	2	1	0	
4. Process evaluation is included so results may be used for curricular revisions.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 16

CULTURAL EQUITY

Materials reflect cultural equity when there is a balance in the positive representation of diverse populations.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. Materials contain no demeaning labels or stereotypes of minorities.	4	3	2	1	0	
2. Materials display a variety of diverse ethnic groups.	4	3	2	1	0	
3. Materials display minorities in a variety of professions.	4	3	2	1	0	
4. Materials present minority contributions and achievements.	4	3	2	1	0	
5. Materials depict differences in customs as desirable.	4	3	2	1	0	
6. Materials contain equal representation of minorities in mental and physical activities.	4	3	2	1	0	
7. Materials show socioeconomic ranges for different minority groups.	4	3	2	1	0	
8. Materials reflect a balance of both traditional and nontraditional family compositions.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 32

SEX EQUITY

Sex equity refers to a balance of gender roles, depicted in traditional and nontraditional settings.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1. Materials contain equal illustrations of and portrayals of males and females in occupations/activities.	4	3	2	1	0	
2. Materials maintain a balance of traditional and nontraditional male and female roles.	4	3	2	1	0	
3. Materials contain neutral language (e.g., people, persons, men and women, they, etc.).	4	3	2	1	0	
4. Materials portray both sexes in parenting activities with families.	4	3	2	1	0	
5. Materials contain no demeaning labels or role stereotypes.	4	3	2	1	0	
6. Materials show equal representation of males/females in mental and physical activities.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____ of 24

DISTRICT-SPECIFIC CRITERIA

District-specific criteria include any additional requirements an individual district may want to make, including the incorporation of any state or local requirements for health instruction.

Criteria	Degree to which criterion is met					Needs/Comments
	Completely	To some degree			Not at all	
		75%	50%	25%		
1.	4	3	2	1	0	
2.	4	3	2	1	0	
3.	4	3	2	1	0	
4.	4	3	2	1	0	
5.	4	3	2	1	0	
6.	4	3	2	1	0	

TOTAL SCORE: _____

SUMMARY OF CURRICULA ANALYSES

Summary of Curricula Analyses		Goals and Objectives (28)	Content (20)	Teaching Strategies (16)	Learning Activities (16)	Materials (36)	Time (16)	Evaluation (16)	Cultural Equity (32)	Sex Equity (24)	District-specific Criteria	TOTAL
Curriculum Title	**Grade**											

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

California Department of Education. (1977). *Criteria for evaluating the school health education program.* Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

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